

August 22, 09—Michelle

I'll go ahead and send you all my thoughts, in the hopes that we can get some discussion in via email.

The recommendation is extremely vague. I understand SAC's resistance to creating a task force that has as its charge: "...to study the needs of library users for multilingual subject access in the appropriate script(s), and to propose steps to address those needs." This is extremely broad, and looks like a research project that might never be completed.

SAC doesn't do much research on end users or their needs, and I think that may be part of the difficulty here. What SAC typically does is work to determine how best to serve users' subject-related needs once those needs have been identified. They rely on others' research and expertise to inform them as to what those needs are.

It sounded like some SAC members would be interested in developing a user survey that would investigate multilingual user needs, since this topic is of interest to many of them. There was some interest from SAC in following up on whatever such a survey might reveal. I think that was pretty much where SAC stood after the meeting I attended with Magda.

I think the intent of the recommendation needs to be clarified before anyone will feel comfortable moving forward on the research in question.

There are a few questions that need to be answered. I think they have already been discussed to some extent, but not resolved. E.g.:

- What is meant by multilingual subject access? Does this mean providing subject headings in multiple languages on a given record? Does it mean translating LC headings into other languages, or does it mean using subject headings developed by other nations and organizations?
- What method of studying users' needs would be appropriate? If a survey, what language(s) should the survey be provided in? Or do we only want the responses of those who understand English well enough to respond?
- Academic vs. public library users' needs. These are very different populations. Study one, or the other, or both? If both, use different surveys for academic vs. public?

I'm not sure that it is reasonable to ask SAC to interpret such a broad charge however they see fit. In order to make the work manageable, they would have to answer the questions above themselves, and narrow down the charge significantly – and in the end, the work they did would only answer a small portion of the charge as stated in the recommendation. Do we want to try answering some of these questions ourselves? Personally, I think the recommendation as written is too vague to be workable. So who should be responsible for fixing it?

Today was our first day of classes, and we have an 11% enrollment increase this year over last year. Wow.

Michelle

